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ABSTRACT

Based on the assumption that a knowledge of child development is essential when planning an early childhood program, this booklet provides information on the typical development of children from birth to two years. The booklet begins with a description of stages of physical, mental, and social development and presents a chart illustrating the variation in the appearance of developmental milestones, such as locomotion. Section 1 of the booklet addresses physical development, describes ways to create a safe, stimulating environment, discusses the importance of play for development, and suggests toys to enhance development. Section 2 briefly discusses intellectual development and language acquisition and focuses on the importance of talking and reading with infants. Section 3 addresses social and emotional development, focusing on emotional expression and learning. (KB)

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Child Development

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CHILD DEVELOPMENT

: A guide for all those involved in the care and education of children 0-2 years old.

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Anne Watkins, V.S.O.

Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique, 1996.

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Introduction

A knowledge of child development is essential when planning an Early Childhood Programme.

This document has been produced to assist all those who are involved in the care and education of 0-2 year olds in Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique.

It is hoped that it will be of use not only to those striving to enhance the early learning environment and provide quality care and educational experiences in our Day Care Centres; but also to parents, family, caregivers, Doctors and Nurses, all who play a vital role in children's development.

To monitor a child's development time must be spent observing and noting stages of progress. 'Play' time is a good time for these observations. **Play is the way children learn**. They discover through play about themselves and their world. However, they need help to progress from one stage to the next. This help needs to be in the form of **positive** interactions both verbal, physical and emotional.

A child in the Day Care setting spends the majority of his waking hours in our care. Our influence therefore in the early impressionable years is tremendous, our responsibilities immense.

To provide quality care and education we must all accept these responsibilities, be it the cook or the Supervisor, and be constantly open to developing and improving wherever possible.

Stages of Development.

When talking about child development the term **'average'** is often used. These averages are called **milestones** in early development. These can be seen as rough guidelines of what a child can be expected to do at certain stages of development.

However, it is important to note that everyone is unique and what one child does early, another will do later usually without being in any way abnormal.

Even before birth every baby is different. His environment in the womb is unique as one mother is never exactly like another. The genes he inherits from both parents make him special.

Therefore, not only do children develop differently because each is an individual but they also develop differently because various aspects of their environment is different. Parents and families vary so much e.g. lots of brothers and sisters, a large extended family with grandparents to help with child rearing, one parent, lots of stimulation e.g. toys, language, books, etc.

All these factors greatly affect a child's development.

Each child progresses in the three main areas of **physical, mental** and **social** development. Skills in these areas are developed step by step in a certain order. As David Werner emphasises in his book 'Disabled Village Children', "one upon the other like building blocks."

NORMAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT

In order to know how well a child is developing and in which areas she may need special help, we can compare her development with that of other children.

An understanding of *normal child development* can guide us in planning activities that will help the disabled child progress.

Body control develops progressively from the head down:

Development progresses from head
to foot.
first, head and eye control
next, arm, and some hand control
then trunk (body) control, sitting, and balancing
and finally leg contro

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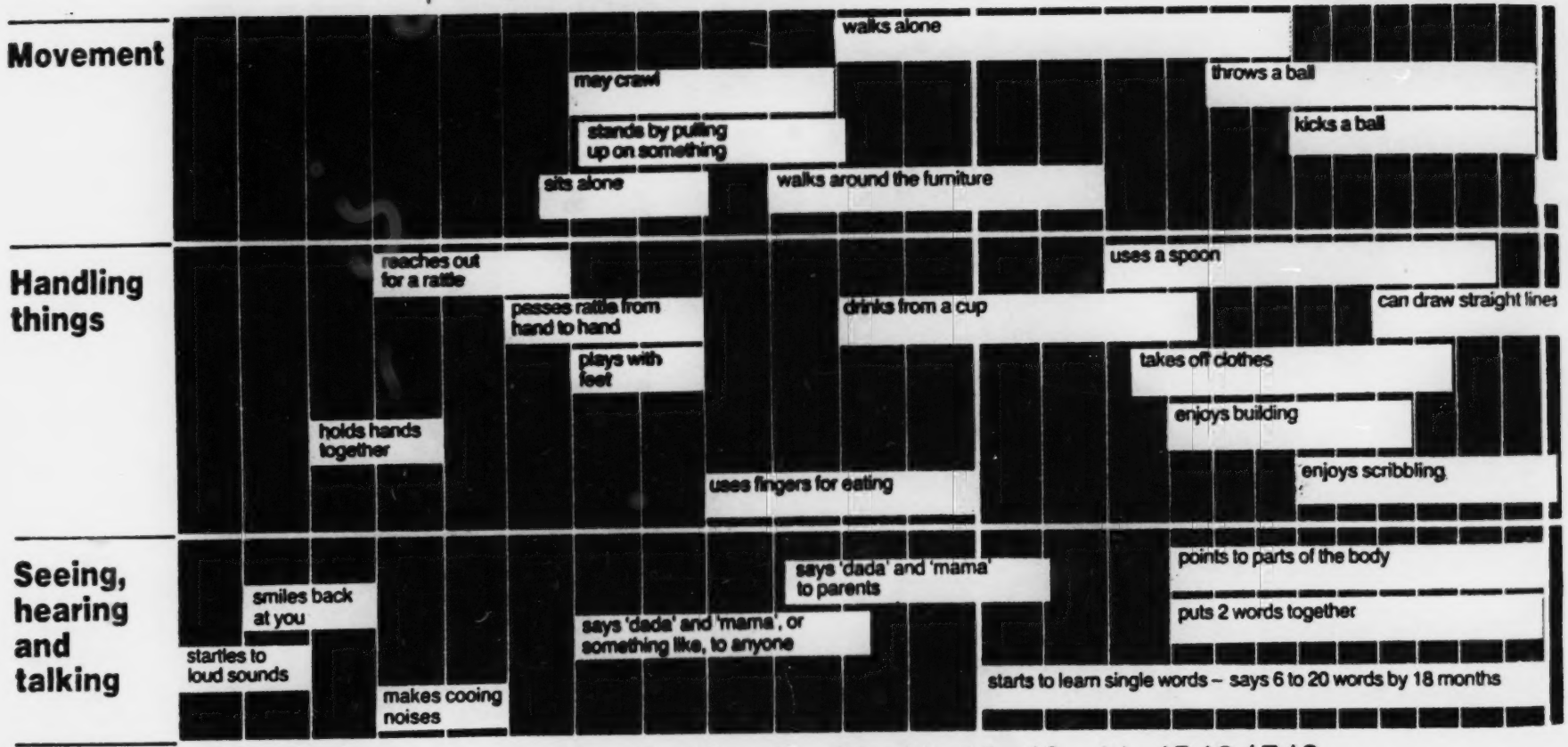
What happens, and when?

This chart will give you some idea of what happens in a child's development. Each band on the chart shows the span of time within which you might expect your child to start doing something.


Movement
walks alone
may crawl
throws a ball
stands by pulling up on something
kicks a ball
sits alone
walks around the furniture
Handling things
reaches out for a rattle
uses a spoon
passes rattle from hand to hand
drinks from a cup
can draw straight lines
plays with feet
takes off clothes
holds hands together
enjoys building
uses fingers for eating
enjoys scribbling
Seeing, hearing and talking
points to parts of the body
says 'dada' and 'mama' to parents
smiles back at you
puts 2 words together
says 'dada' and 'mama', or something like, to anyone
startles to loud sounds
starts to learn single words – says 6 to 20 words by 18 months
makes cooing noises
MONTHS 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18
YEARS 1 1 2

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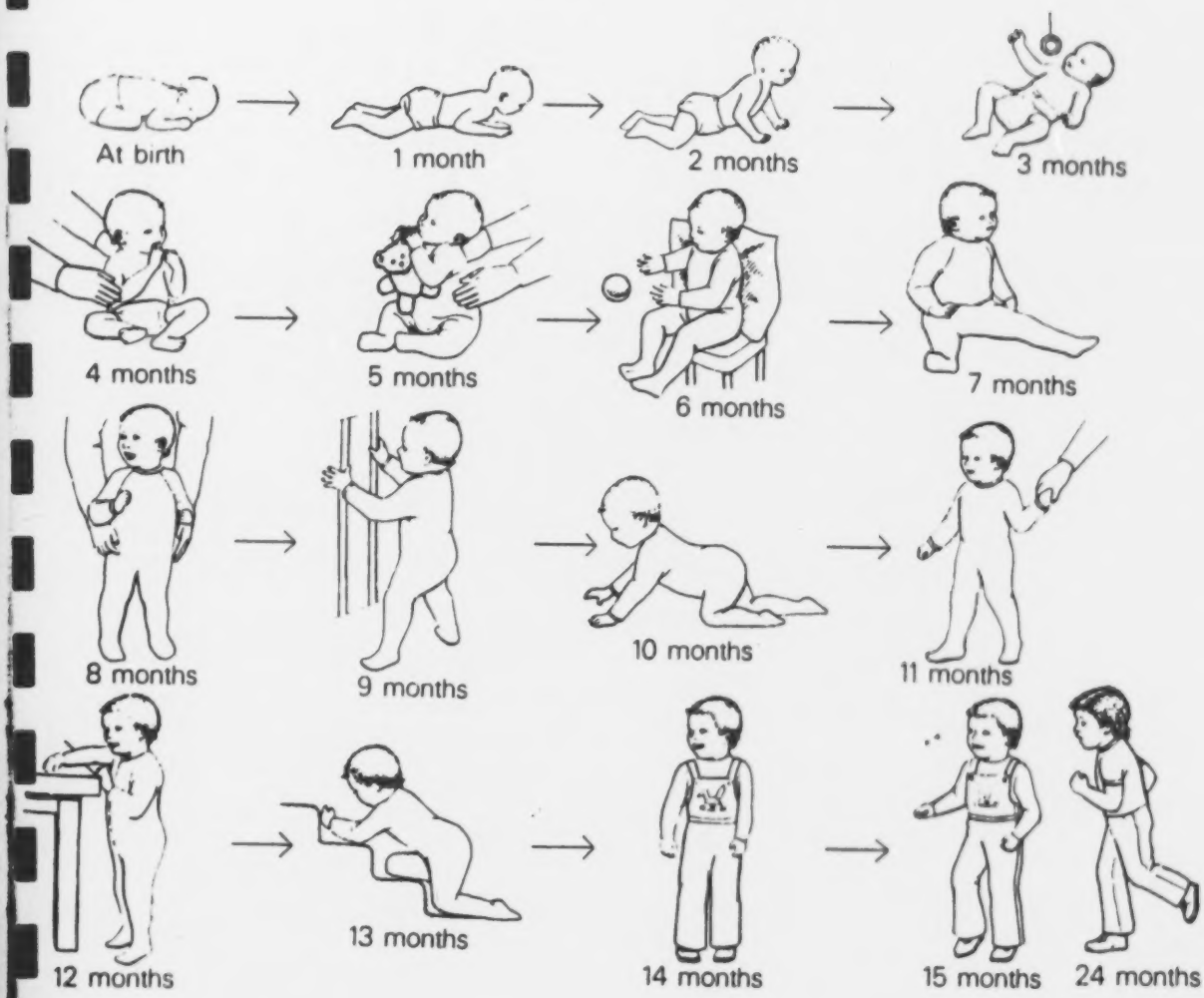
Section 1.

Physical Development

Gradually during the first year of life a baby gains more and more control of his body. As we have seen this control develops progressively from the head down. The illustrations below from Dorothy Baldwin's book 'All about children' give a good guide to the milestones of physical development.



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Before a child can sit, his neck and shoulder muscles must be strong. A child holds up his head to see what is around therefore strengthening hands and arms ready for lifting to a sitting position. Before he can stand, the trunk must be strong. He will begin to reach, lean and twist which helps balance ready for standing and walking.

Normally, day to day interactions with people and things offer this stimulation but it is something we need to be aware of e.g. a baby sitting alone in a crib will not crawl as soon as a baby on the floor with interesting things to look at and lots of **positive people interactions**.

From birth to two a child is in the sensory motor stage of development. This means that he is learning **actively** through his senses and through his body movements. His motor development during this time is considerable. He develops from a helpless dependant baby who cannot even roll over; to a fully mobile, walking, running child. A young child derives much pleasure from merely practising these new found skills.

A **safe, stimulating** environment needs to be provided so that the young 'explorer' can practise, experiment and find out as much as possible, e.g.:-

- allow plenty of space for mobile toddlers to roll, stretch, crawl and walk. Provide time outdoors as well as inside.

- put pillows and cushions around so children can crawl over and around them.
- allow children whenever possible to work things out for themselves, this will encourage confidence and problem solving skills.
- provide small and large group activities so that children can interact. These need to be short and simple to cater for children's immature levels of concentration e.g. singing songs, playing simple action games, musical instruments, exploring rhythm and moving independently to music.
- provide simple puzzles, matching games, household objects e.g. cups, saucers, spoons and manipulative toys e.g. screw rods to help children develop hand-eye co-ordination.
- provide crayons, paint, chalk and large blackboards or pieces of paper to allow freedom of shoulder, arm and hand movements.
- provide play dough, clay, plasticine, so that children can pound, roll, squeeze, punch and mould. At the very early stages an end product is not important e.g. cutting out shapes, etc. The sensory motor experience is the important part and props e.g. rolling pins, cutters, etc. are best introduced at a later stage.

Physical development can be seen in the areas of **gross motor**, (large physical movement) and **fine motor**, (small movement). Fine motor skills involve arm, hand and finger control.

By the age of six months fine motor skills are developing when a baby can reach for, grasp and hold a hanging object. However, at this stage they find it difficult to let go, this skill develops over the next few months.

Between nine to fourteen months the skill of picking up a small object with the fingers is mastered. From using initially the whole hand, to the pincer grasp of thumb and forefinger when their muscles strengthen and are a little more developed.

Babies small muscles can be helped to strengthen by e.g.:-

- allowing them to help take off shoes and socks at rest or bath time.
- turning the pages of a board book.
- picking up pieces of finger food e.g. fruit, bread, etc.
- picking up small toys and putting them in a container.

and many other activities some of which have already been mentioned.

The Importance of Play.

Play is a very important part of a growing child's development. Dorothy Baldwin in her book 'All about children' says that "Play is the way all children learn body and mind skills. Play progresses from one stage to the next in a definite time sequence."

It is interesting to note that whatever cultural background a child comes from, with obviously a wide variety of experiences and interactions development occurs within much the same time frame. Although naturally a rural Australian Aboriginal child who essentially lives a free outdoor life develops his gross motor skills at an earlier stage than the inner city American child.

Stimulation is essential for healthy growth. A child's body and mind is developed by stimulation through the five senses.

A baby learns by looking, listening, touching, smelling and tasting.

In order for a baby to learn about life stimulation is necessary. Natural curiosity needs to be satisfied during a baby's waking hours. They will be drawn to certain things e.g. faces, and objects that are bright and colourful and make a noise.

He learns about things in the early stages mainly through his mouth by licking and sucking.

Toys.

As well as commercially bought toys interesting items for children to explore can be household and natural objects.

Safety and hygiene obviously need to be considered. One of the most important things to remember in the early stages being - **Is it clean and safe for mouthing, and large enough not to be swallowed?**.

The Preschool Playgroups Association in their book 'Guidelines, Good Practice for Full and Extended Day Care Playgroups recommend that Groups should provide a range of play materials to help babies develop their senses e.g:-

- interesting shapes, textures and weights
- a variety of sounds
- different colours, shiny or dull objects mirrors, etc.
- varying smells and scents
- varying tastes (as appropriate)

Play objects can be natural materials including objects in textiles, rubber, wood, metal, paper.

Other toys and play objects suitable for this age include:-

- Mobiles and hanging toys
- Music boxes

- Rattles
- Soft fabric dolls and cubes
- Lightweight building blocks
- Washable and board books
- Large pegboard sets
- Stacking cups and rings
- Simple pop-up toys
- Push/pull toys
- Banging toys
- Large toy vehicles
- Small soft rubber balls
- Simple musical instruments
- Activity centres and mats
- Action toys
- Suction cup toys
- Handheld mirrors
- Posting boxes and shape sorters
- Baby walker trolley and bricks
- Simple lift out jigsaws

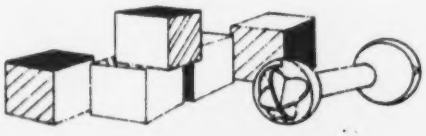
Toddlers should also be provided with soft play and climbing equipment and small sit on and ride toys.

Dorothy Baldwin in her book 'All about children' suggests at what ages particular toys are appropriate.

At three months

Bright shiny rings and rattles with interesting shapes.
Coloured ribbon or streamers, mobiles, swinging above cot or pram.

From six to nine months



Jangly bells, wooden bricks, plastic spoons for learning hand skills.
Teething ring with small rattle inside for biting and shaking.
Saucepan and lid for banging: blocks for knocking down.

By the first birthday

Fluffy toy: not too large: can be hand-made or bought.
Baby walker, sturdy box on wheels for improving walking skills.
Bath toys: plastic duck, cups, any floating container which is safe.
Blocks, bricks, cotton reels, empty cartons, spinning top, ball.

At two

Large brightly painted and decorated strong cardboard box with child's name in big letters. Converts to house when empty; toys kept tidily in it at night.
Picture book with large simple drawings – can be hand-made.
Fat wax crayons and drawing paper – unused wall-paper or paper bags will do.
Teddy, rag doll, any stuffed animal for cuddling and lugging around.
Peg-boards, rings on sticks, small dust-pan and brush.

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Section 2.

Intellectual Development

A baby begins learning, many people believe even before he is born. After birth he begins adapting his reflexes and co-ordinating his actions using all his senses and motor skills in an effort to understand his environment. Through the repeated exercise of these reflexes the newborn baby gains information about the world that will be used to develop the next stage of learning.

Achievements in this area, Berger in her book 'The Developing Person Through Childhood and Adolescence' says are "Part of cognition, that is, the interaction of all the perceptual, intellectual and linguistic abilities that are involved in thinking and learning."

Before the research of Piaget young babies intelligence was largely underestimated, mainly because of the lack of language. However, we now know that very young children possess a highly active intelligence.

The growth of intellectual development produces huge changes in a young child. His capacity to understand and communicate changes him from a helpless baby to a thinking, talking, reasoning (at the very basic stage) interesting individual.

Love, security and acceptance need to be experienced from the very earliest days.

A child who feels insecure and unloved will not develop his mind and body as quickly as a child who feels loved and cared for.

Through positive experiences a baby learns to trust and develop a positive self esteem. If a young child feels happy, safe and secure he is free to develop, eager and confident to learn.

Dorothy Baldwin in her book 'All about children' says that the caregiver who nurtures this self image:-

1. Goes to the baby as soon as he calls .
2. Make sure he stops feeling hungry or thirsty.
3. Makes sure he feels, clean and warm and dry.
4. Talks and plays with him so he begins to learn about life.
5. Picks him up and cuddles him so he feels wanted and loved.

Physical contact is very important and touching, holding, rocking and cuddling all promote a sense of security and well being. A child from an insecure background will show sings of deprivation at a very early age.

Language Acquisition.

A baby's first means of communication is crying. This is the means by which he communicates his needs.

His language develops rapidly with babbling at the early stages. All babies babble the same sounds no matter what language their parents speak and although a baby may be deaf they will still babble. However, a deaf baby will not go onto speak words without very special help. They do not **hear** words being spoken so they cannot learn language. The same is true of a hearing child if there is little verbal stimulation.

Babbling is felt to be a very important stage as it gives the child the opportunity to control lung, throat and mouth muscles in preparation for later language.

Babies and young children must be spoken to as much as possible. If a child does not begin responding their hearing should be checked as early as possible as even a slight hearing loss can delay speech.

Children in every country follow a similar pattern in the acquisition of language, (see the chart under the area of seeing, hearing and talking on page 3.)

As with other areas of development children's language will progress at vastly different rates.

A normal child's ability to communicate develops through these stages:

Learning that prepares a baby for speech begins early, long before she says her first word. Speech develops out of body movement, use of the mouth and tongue in eating, and use of the senses—through interaction with people and things.

A child's comprehension skills of being able to understand simple words and gestures and communicate happily is more important than the actual number of words he can speak. However, most toddlers eagerly echo names and try out new sounds just for enjoyment. In fact, by two years of age most children have a grasp of grammar and vocabulary that is quite surprising.

Books.

Books play a very important part in language development. Indeed Jeanne Machado in her book 'Early Childhood Language Experiences in Language Arts' says that "Next to hugging your child, reading aloud is probably the longest lasting experience that you can put in your child's life."

A child's positive early reading experiences at home and Day Care will have a lasting effect.

They will help a child develop a good attitude to literature and go a

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long way in helping motivate him to learn to read.

Looking at picture books and reading stories together is a good one to one, as well as group activity. It can begin with a baby as young as a few months of age. As the child matures you will see the change in his interest and ability, and levels of concentration and interaction.

A nine month old enjoys merely staring at the shapes and patterns in a large brightly coloured picture book.

By eighteen months he will be beginning to recognise some things which are familiar to him, pointing to them and wanting the name repeated for him.

By two years of age he will be wanting to turn the pages and verbalise the name for himself. **Remember however**, that his concentration span will probably be very short and being repeatedly forced to sit may produce negative effects which could eventually turn him off the whole process of reading.

Books are however a very good way to encourage good listening skills. Also during the early years books help a lot in the initial awareness of print. Reading related activities also help in this awareness and appreciation of print e.g.:-

- Home-made picture and story books about maybe a bus trip or a birthday party.
- Photo books of familiar things such as animals, family, etc.

- Catalogues and magazines featuring toys, household objects.
- Home-made sensory books using fabric, sandpaper, natural objects (sand, leaves, seeds, etc.).

As with all activities for young children a touch and feel book that children can interact with in a 'hands on' way is much more meaningful. Other senses are used as well as sight and hearing.

These home-made books obviously need to be strong and well made. As parents and caregivers we can help young children through these early activities to begin to understand some important things e.g.:-

- That books are special and must not be handled like a toy.
- That books are a source of great pleasure.
- That objects depicted in a book are a representation of something e.g. a picture of a cow.
- That there is predictability e.g. The story of the three bears in a favourite book never changes.

*BEWARE OF THE OVER USE OF TV AND VIDEO

At this early age it is a passive occupation that if we are not careful can replace the important adult-child language interactions. It is a solitary occupation lacking the one to one physical closeness of sitting on a lap to hear a story, or look at a picture book.

Section 3.

Social and Emotional Development

The social life of the young child begins at a very early age. The desire for company and interactions are expressed very early on in a baby's life.

Even during the first month of life babies are capable of expressing a number of emotions such as fear, sadness, surprise, etc. He also responds to other people's emotions, feelings and moods. Emotions are expressed much more obviously towards the end of the first year.

During the second year new emotions emerge because of growth of intellectual development. Toddlers become more conscious of themselves and others and the distinctions between people. Emotions such as guilt, pride and embarrassment may be displayed.

Babies emotions are shared initially with adults. Our influence upon young children cannot be underestimated. Even a very young baby will sense our emotions by our tone of voice, features, physical condition e.g. abrupt and rough, soft, gentle and unhurried, etc.

Children observe and absorb information very readily and we need to be careful how our emotions are handled in front of them. Children will note and often imitate. For example, if we show a fear of dogs the chances are so will the child.

A very real fear to some young children is being separated from their parents. As Day Care staff we need to handle this in the most sensitive way possible. Being there for the children to offer diversion, physical love, attention and reassurance is very important.

Parents themselves may also experience anxieties and need reassurance and help in handling the situation.

Young children need to learn to socialise. At the toddler stage they are very egocentric or self centred. When they realise that they are not the centre of the world the stage of temper tantrums may occur.

Children go through various stages of play before they are really ready to share and socialise. Firstly solitary play, secondly parallel play (playing beside a companion of the same age) with maybe short bursts of interaction. Thirdly, co-operative play, as children mature in their third year they gradually begin to want to co-operate and share and strong friendships are often formed at this stage.

Children need to learn what is acceptable behaviour. This they learn by firm, kind guidance from parents and caregivers. Above all this guidance needs to be consistent. Teaching by example is very important.

Young children learn more by example and imitation, rather than by words

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